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COVER: Red fox and white-footed mouse. Painting is by Mrs. Robert Burneston, Catlett, Virginia.

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RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES TO WILDLIFE

The following resolution adopted by the NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION at their 38th Annual Convention, Denver, Colorado, has an important message for all who enjoy wildlife.

WHEREAS, throughout the known history of the species, man has been a hunter, deriving an inner sense of well-being and fulfillment from his pursuit of his quarry; and

WHEREAS, in the past the National Wildlife Federation has supported the hunter as a tool of wildlife management, particularly in his relationship to certain big game species and for the financial contribution he has made to wildlife conservation; and

WHEREAS, increasingly, television and other facets of the mass media have distorted and misrepresented the role of hunting and the character of the hunter; and

WHEREAS, some organizations have derived benefit from pitting the non-consumptive users of wildlife against the consumptive users (hunters, fishermen and trappers); and

WHEREAS, the National Wildlife Federation feels that the resulting conflict between consumptive and non-consumptive wildlife interests is counter-productive, diverting energy and funds from more worthwhile purposes such as habitat improvement, acquisition, and wildlife research; and

WHEREAS, in a time of expanding human population and diminishing wildlife habitat it is essential for all groups and individuals genuinely concerned with the conservation of the wildlife resource to work in concert;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation, in annual convention assembled March 28-31, 1974, in Denver, Colo., makes the following statement of policy:

—All users of wildlife, non-consumptive and consumptive, have rights and responsibilities to the resource. In the case of hunters, fishermen and trappers, this right extends to the harvestable surplus of game and fish as determined by scientific wildlife management and to the conservation and aesthetic values of all wildlife; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation, through its publications and educational material, will emphasize the need for mutual cooperation and respect between those interested in wildlife conservation and will in no way contribute to the alienation of one interest against another.

LETTERS

For Fairer Fee

IT seems to me that Game Commissions could be accused of collusion to discriminate against the out-of-state hunter and/or fisherman. I am an out-of-state hunter and have been coming to Virginia for over 35 years to spend a month, or an entire season now since my retirement. I own eight acres of land in my hunting area on which I've placed a late-model mobile home. This year I will pay $40 for the privilege of hunting small and large game, while the local resident will pay $10. Forty dollars is nominal in comparison to other states; nevertheless, discrimination is plainly visible.

It would be interesting to know what the out-of-state hunter contributes to the economy of the state, local businesses and to the Game Commission. In addition to license purchases, extra business is poured into the coffers of sporting goods stores, service stations, grocery stores, clothing stores, doctors. . . .

The out of stater isn't charged more to use other state and national park recreation areas for camping, hiking, etc. Why not share the great outdoors with hunters and fishermen of sister states on an equal-fee basis? The economic effects could be astronomical.

V. E. Mitchell
Miami, Fla., & Scottsville, Va.

WHILE the discrepancy between resident and non-resident license fees seems unfair and punitive, there are major differences between hunting and fishing and the more common tourist pursuits. An out-of-state visitor to our beaches doesn't take the beach home with him. Wildlife is the property of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and a hunting or fishing license allows a person to take personal possession of this state property. I think it could be argued that a resident has a little more vested interest in the property of the Commonwealth and might therefore be entitled to some preferential treatment.

This is certainly the feeling of most residents, and it is through their insistence that the fee differential exists rather than by any urging of the Commission. We never have to ask for increases in non-resident license fees. A recent study conducted by the Wildlife Management Institute indicated that for various reasons a ratio of 5 to 1—non-resident to resident—was a reasonable differential. Since Virginia's is only 4 to 1 we are below the recommended maximum. Income from non-resident hunters who represent about ten percent of our hunters provides about ten percent of our operating budget.

If non-resident license fees were lowered, it would have some profound effects on our management program. We would probably receive more revenue but wildlife resources in some areas would receive so much pressure that hunting would have to be restricted by drawing or some similar method. Costs of administration and law enforcement would likewise increase. If game and hunting lands were equally distributed among the states such a scheme might work, but they are not.—Ed.

WESTERN DEER CAMP

By BILL COCHRAN
Roanoke

THE white frame cabin with its gray tin roof stands at the end of a bumpy ride off Barbours Creek in Craig County and is shaded by a single tall pine tree that moans in the November breezes. Fresh posted signs along the way tell you the place belongs to the Craig Sportsman's Club, and warn you that you best stay away if you aren't an invited guest.

At the front door, which seldom is used, there is a faded sign: "Recommended by Duncan Hines." It's meant to be a joke, of course, but when you tramp up the back steps, cross the wooden porch and open the door, you suddenly find yourself in the kitchen. The aroma that greets you tells you maybe Duncan Hines wouldn't do wrong by recommending this joint after all.

Laboring over a wood stove that continually sends curls of sweet smelling smoke out of the faded brick chimney is Joe Simmons, an ex-Army cook. Simmons has a wrist-breaking No. 14 black iron skillet filled with fried potatoes and is adding chunks of onions, the kind of grub that makes strong men weep with joy.

The next room deeper into the house is a combination living room-dining room. Two deer heads adorn the walls, attesting to the purpose of this cabin. A plaque states: "You don't have to be crazy to vacation here, but it helps."

It is the day before deer season, and the room is filled with red-clad hunters, cigarette smoke and warm memories. The scene is one being repeated in scores of similar cabins nestled in the hollows and on the hillsides all across Virginia's western deer country.

Harry Torian is president of the club, a short, balding man with keen shooting eyes that have accounted for seven deer on club property. Backing Torian in authority is Hudson Wilt, past president, a cherry-faced man with long, stately trimmed, grayish sideburns and a slight northern accent. The two men call the 16 members around the long dining table for the all-important drawing that will determine who gets what hunting stand come morning. Sixteen playing cards are placed face down and the men quickly grab them up. Low card holder gets first pick.

"I'll take the tree stand," says one, grinning and holding the two of spades.

"I want the saddle," says another. "I saw a lot of deer up there during the bow season. There was this one old buck . . ." But no one pays much attention to the story. Each man is caught up in his own thoughts and plans.

Wilt chooses stand No. 21, a stump overlooking a swag that rolls down into a farm field. He's killed three bucks from that spot.

The 78-acre club holding is roughly rectangular in shape and contains 21 stands laid out along proven deer crossings and staggered so as to make it impossible to shoot from one to another. Safety is one of the major reasons the club was organized back in 1957, explains charter member Lynn Grubbs. Most of the group before then hunted on national forest land in the Potts Mountain area.

"About two years before we bought this property, I had a rifle bullet pass so close to my head I heard it sing," said Grubbs. The tune it sang was the same that

Joe Simmons, an ex-Army cook, prepares the kind of food that makes strong men weep with joy.

Photos by Ernest Rakes

has caused many sportsmen to form similar clubs throughout much of western Virginia.

But safety is only one of the reasons western hunters ban together in clubs. There is the comfort and convenience of having club facilities on the doorstep of deer country. This eliminates the need for sleeping in a cold tent or commuting back and forth from home each day.

Perhaps the biggest attraction, though, is the companionship, the joy of sharing the hunt with fellow sportsmen known and respected. Members of many clubs gather at their cabin from time to time throughout the year, and some even use the organization to support conservation and pro-hunting movements.

Club activities begin to intensify sharply when splotches of red, gold and orange start to appear against the mountainsides and deer hunting fever is fanned by the cooling breezes of fall. Autumn weekends often are spent sprucing up the cabin and zeroing rifles at the 100-yard range out back. By opening day eve, the spirit around the cabin is not unlike the same that thrills children the night before Christmas.

After the drawing, most of the members of the Craig Sportsman's Club leave the cabin to take a look at their stand. Torian, who is the huntmaster as well as president, scouts across a wide swath of the property, his keen eyes picking up well used deer trails, buck scratchings in the leaves, and peeled saplings where bucks have polished their antlers. Each stand he passes has a story to be told, of a buck bagged or nearly bagged. Torian returns to the cabin to report an abundance of buck scrappings.

"But you can't eat buck scrappings," quips crusty Roy Newkirk, in his upper 60's, the oldest and one of the best loved members.

Darkness comes and heaps of special cut steaks are ready to go onto the grill. Simmons has towering bowls of tossed salad ready, the potatoes are done, and pots of coffee and tea are bubbling on the stove. Some of the members drink hot tea for fear coffee will keep them awake. But likely it is the excitement that makes getting to sleep tough, not coffee.

After dinner, a fast-paced poker game attracts several members in one of the bunk rooms. Others soon begin drifting off to bed, laying out wool socks and long-johns for easy grabbing the next morning.

"Well, we waited a whole year for this," says Wilt as he climbs into his bunk.

"Seems to me it's been longer that that," replies Newkirk.

Morning comes early, 5 a.m. The aroma of bacon frying drifts out of the kitchen to mingle with the fragrance of coffee. Wilt is going from bunk to bunk asking, "What would you like, orange or tomato juice?" It is a polite way of awakening the late sleepers.

Simmons soon has mountains of fluffy scrambled eggs, bacon and hot biscuits on the table. Outside, the temperature is a balmy 52. It stimulates debates over just how much clothes should be worn.

Torian reminds the members to be on the lookout for poachers. Then the story is told about the time he killed a deer and was field dressing it when along came a trespasser.

"What you doing in here?" Torian charged.

"I'm lost," insisted the trespasser.

"Then grab the hind legs of this deer and I'll show you the way out of here," said Torian.

Breakfast is over and the hunters hustle for their red coats and rifles, then push off into the blackness to be settled on their stands before morning gives shape to the woodlands. A troublesome, swirling wind comes with daylight, shoving along angry-looking clouds. It moans in the pines and causes the pole-sized hardwood to creak like the mast of some ancient sailing ship. What's worse, it makes hearing the approach of a deer almost impossible.

The deer appear reluctant to move. The hunters sit tight until 10 a.m., then begin returning to the cabin with thoughts of Simmons' beef stew activating their

(Continued on page 11)

Fast-paced poker game attracts several members on opening day eve.

DURN DOVES

By D. R. MILLER
Asst. Supervisor, Law Enforcement Div.

THE sun was hot and high in the sky. The swarm of gnats aggravated me. Perspiration was trickling down my back. This didn't seem like hunting season, yet I sat at the edge of the field looking skyward.

It had been a long wait since last hunting season. My finger itched and the .20 gauge felt good in my hands. I was anxious and full of anticipation. Then suddenly after 10 months, all thinking was shattered. Four hundred yards away and flying in my direction were three birds. Through the Polaroids they looked like, acted like, flew like—no mistake, they were—DOVES, coming fast and hard with more maneuvers than a butterfly trying to cross a busy interstate highway.

One of my co-hunters shouted, "birds," and I realized that I was the envy of the party because they are going to pass directly over my position. All eyes were on me. I flipped the safety on the Model 12, and as my targets approached 200 feet, I relaxed and brought the butt plate of the shotgun to my shoulder. They seemed to slow a little and gain composure at 150 feet, still flying in a direct line to my position. At 100 feet I picked up the lead bird and followed him with the bead on the front of the Winchester. At 50 feet and fluttering directly toward me the three doves appeared to assemble in a tight group. I could contain myself no longer. Wondering about a triple, sure of a double and positive of a single, I squeezed the trigger and a load of number 8 shot exploded from the barrel. An instant of bewilderment and frustration followed as the doves flew on.

Misunderstanding and disbelief preceded my working the pump action. Now the three targets were directly overhead. As I pointed the barrel toward them, for just an instant, I was concerned with hitting the bird with the full load and complete destruction.

Deciding to be unmerciful, and to collect the bounty of my first dove of the year, I pulled the trigger a second time. The doves flew on.

The next moment was full of anger and my mind was blinded with darkness as I jerked off the third and final round in the shotgun and sent the shot into infinity.

I was deaf to the shouts and comments of my hunting companions as the three doves sped toward the distant locust grove. My only alternative was to reach down, with head lowered, take three shells from the box and reload. As I injected the #1 shell into the shotgun, I remembered the story about the sportsman who decided to try his luck at dove shooting. On his first shot his effort was successful and he collected a bird. The next 53 shots he missed.

The number 2 shell fell into place and I recalled an incident where a companion had connected with a bird on the wing but the wound was not fatal. The bird settled on a tree limb. A lady hunter who had been unsuccessful with the flying variety took careful aim and pulled the trigger on the .12 gauge shotgun; she missed the bird but completely destroyed its perch. The dove had no choice but to fly away.

My eyes glanced for a challenge in the big clear sky above the cornfield as the #3 shell filled the chamber.

I remembered one of those days last year when I couldn't miss. Thinking I had obtained my limit, I removed and counted the bounty from my bag. As number 8 bird was dropped into the pile, he jumped into the air and flew away.

Such experiences start each year when an inconspicuous article appears on the sports page of most papers which reads, "Dove Season Begins."

A few sportsmen glance at the article and wonder, "Why do they want to shoot these little birds?"

Some bird shooter reads the article and tells himself, "Some day I'll try this sport."

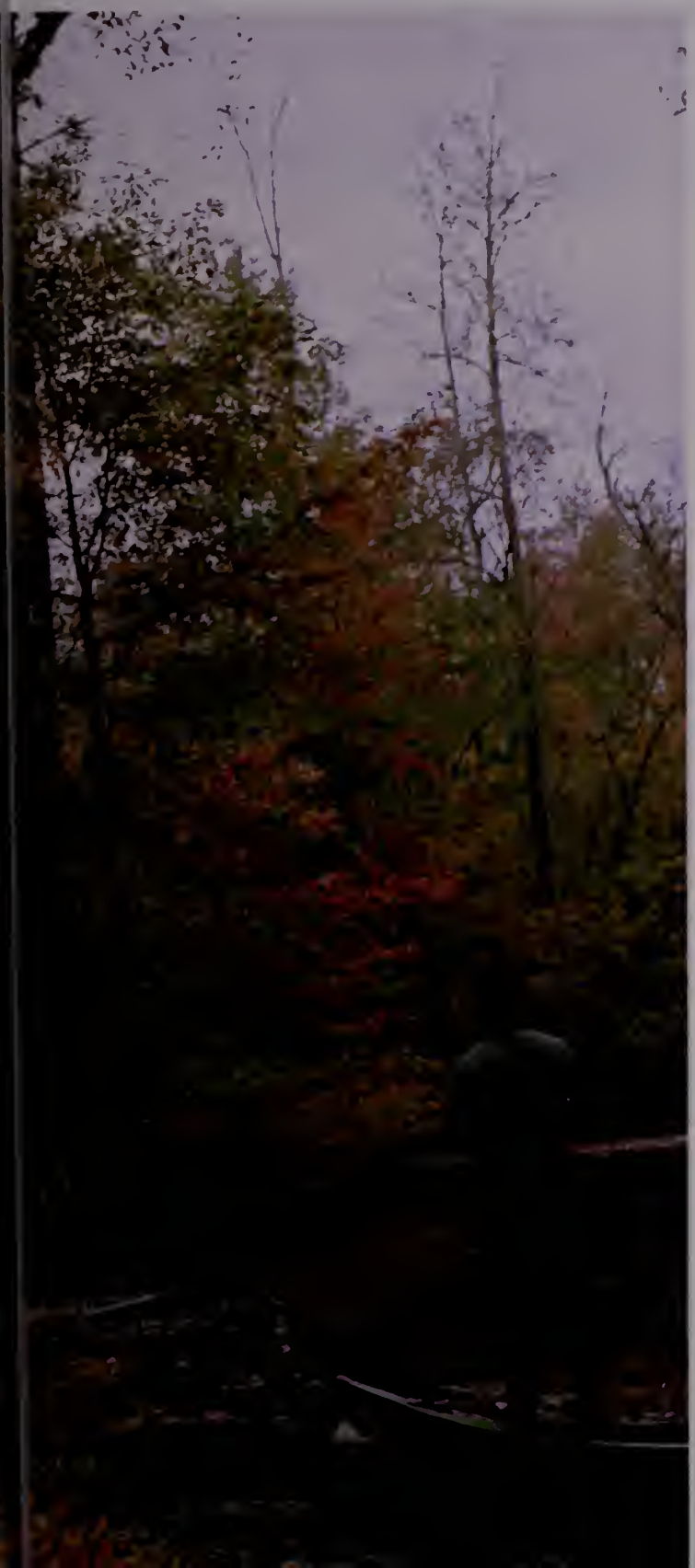
But the breed of man who calls himself a "dove hunter" reads the article at least three times and can only say to himself, "Oh, Oh, here we go again!"

Last year my averages were about 8 to 10 doves a box of shells. And this year I completely missed my first three shots. I just don't understand how I could possibly have missed all *three* shots. Is this a sport or an aggravation?

But I stop trying to answer the question when one of my companions yells, "birds." I crouch into a fence row and smack at a gnat, and my eyes search the sky . . . *"DURN DOVES."*

VIRGINIA'S LONELIEST RIVER

Text & Photos by PETE ELKINS
Lexington



AFTER the launch at the New Dragon Bridge on Route #603, civilization disappears. The adventure begins there with the haunting calls of a string of Canada geese passing overhead. It ends two days later with the dreary rumble of trucks across the Route #17 Bridge near Saluda.

Dragon Run is a narrow stream that twists through Middlesex County. The lower portion of the stream evolves into the Piankatank River, which empties into the Chesapeake. The upper portions of Dragon Run, or simply "The Dragon" as its lovers call it, offer the wildest isolation in eastern Virginia.

Giant cypress knees stand like ancient sentinels along its shoreline. Above Saluda, the Dragon lies in the midst of a hardwood swamp. In late October or early November, the hardwoods are an artist's mixture of oak, maple, and poplar. Holly, dogwood, swamp ash, and tupelo add to the variety of the Dragon.

During the summer months, cardinal flowers embellish the swamp's lushness. Violets abound in the dirt-packed base of the cypresses.

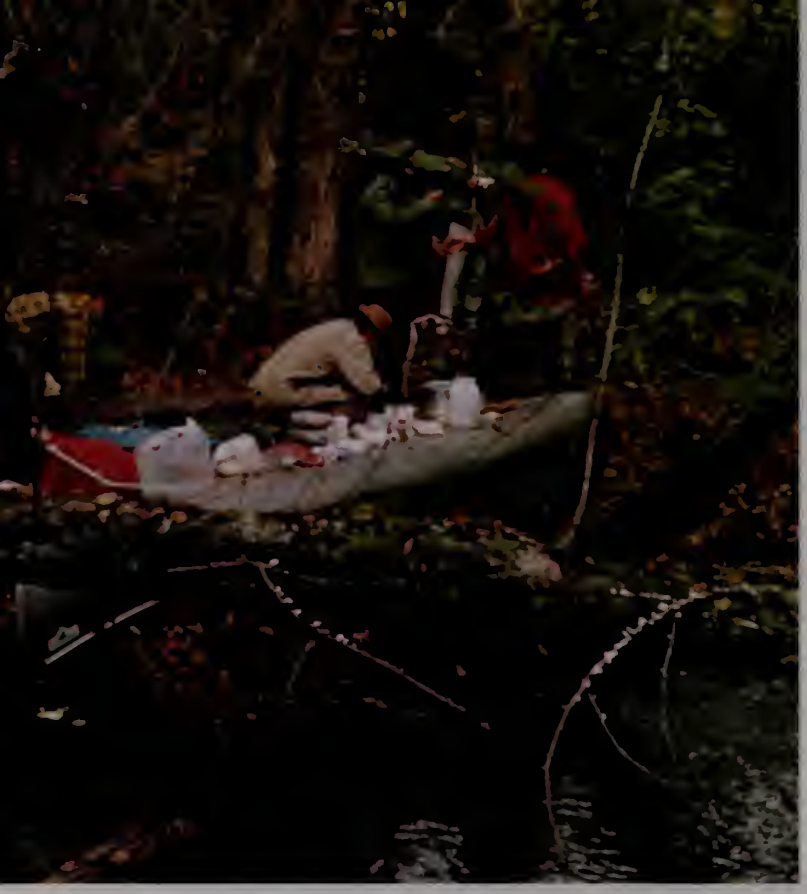
Among the hardwoods prowl gray fox, deer, raccoon, mink, beaver, bobcat, and wild turkey. Squirrel hunters would find their favorite rare because of the swamp's low mast yield. The deer come there in November to escape the hunting dogs. Men come to the Dragon throughout the year to escape other things.

Ray Corning of the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries spoke for those who had preceded and would follow him along the stream: "There's a loneliness here, an isolation that will become more and more important as Richmond and Washington sprawl toward one another."

Ray was talking with Robert Stewart, Peter Ring, Jim White, John Ekman, and other members of the Float Fishermen of Virginia organization. Dick Rabun of Winchester and I had joined them for a two-day float on the Dragon. It was the morning of the second day of our trip. The day before had been filled with splendid isolation and savage chain pickerel.

Ray's words trailed away with the smoke of the morning campfire. On the fire was a frying pan of sausage and eggs. Behind the fire was an overturned canoe, an expedient and appropriate table. Behind and below the canoe was Dragon Run, flowing low and clear toward Route 17 eight miles away.

A pileated woodpecker screamed somewhere far off in the swamp. A marsh hen noisily overturned a fallen



Dick Rabun tends campfire behind the canoe-table during second day of Dragon Run float.

Virginia's Loneliest River (Cont. from p. 7)

leaf. The loneliness was good; not like the loneliness that comes in a crowd. This was the loneliness of wilderness, a humbling, cleansing loneliness.

Dragon Run has a fascinating array of bird life: barred owls, least bitterns, ovenbirds, prothonotary warblers, white-eyed vireos, swamp sparrows, pileated woodpeckers, ladder-backed woodpeckers, great blue herons, kingfishers, and others. The area is a bit too moist for most small songbirds typical of other Virginia forests.

If Ray Corning and others like him have their way, Dragon Run will become a part of Virginia's proposed Scenic Rivers Program. As a Scenic River, the Dragon would be preserved in its natural state without fear of civilized inroads. Fortunately for this lonely river, the voracious Chesapeake Corporation in nearby West Point finds it easier to grow pulpwood than to penetrate and log the Dragon's woodlands.

Beavers are still the loggers of Dragon Run. These industrious mammals are seldom seen, but their work is everywhere. A few of the larger beaver dams are almost ten feet high, backing water for more than a mile upstream.

Outdoorsmen who come to the Dragon are a different breed. They come in the winter when the water is high to jumpshoot ducks along the tangled streams. Mallards, black, and wood ducks, plus an occasional Canada goose are the normal quarry. But if the hunters don't bag ducks, they don't really care. It's the Dragon they come to see.

A canoe is the best way to see the Dragon. However, don't expect an easy trip. The Dragon's charms are only for the devout and the healthy. During high waters of spring and winter, traveling is relatively easy with no more than several dozen log jams and fallen trees to drag a fully loaded canoe over or around. During the low waters of summer or late fall, travel is a physical challenge. Unless you're in good physical condition, *don't* tackle Dragon Run during low water. Innumerable trees completely block a canoe's passage, forcing its occupants to go overboard, then wrestle the canoe across the obstacle.

Summer visitors should also be alert for copperheads. Common sense dictates that walking around after dark should be avoided. Although there are brown water snakes on the Dragon, the stream is well north of the water moccasin's range.

A single trip on the Dragon will separate the devoted from the others. After the trip is over, when you're once again dry and warm, when the poison ivy begins to spread, when muscles ache, when bruises blacken, then you'll know whether the Dragon is for you. If you decide to cross the primitive river off your travel list, no one will blame you. But if something lures you back for another try, then you've fallen under the Dragon's lonely spell.

For the fisherman, the Dragon can be superb. According to Ray Corning, there are twenty-five species of fish in the Dragon, but only five are of interest to sportsmen: chain pickerel, redbreast sunfish, yellow perch, and an occasional bluegill or largemouth bass.

Dragon pickerel performs like a freshwater sailfish.

Ray Corning paddles into the autumn loneliness of Dragon Run.

The normal predator ratio does not really exist in a swamp stream. In the Dragon, every fish feeds on every other fish.

The chain pickerel are the stars of the show. Low autumn water concentrates the chain pickerel in deeper areas. At the same time, the cooler nights make those same pickerel aggressive and savage.

During our two-day float, Robert Stewart and I hooked over fifty pickerel. That would be excellent action anywhere. On the Dragon it was exhilarating! The pickerel were bruisers, averaging two pounds or more.

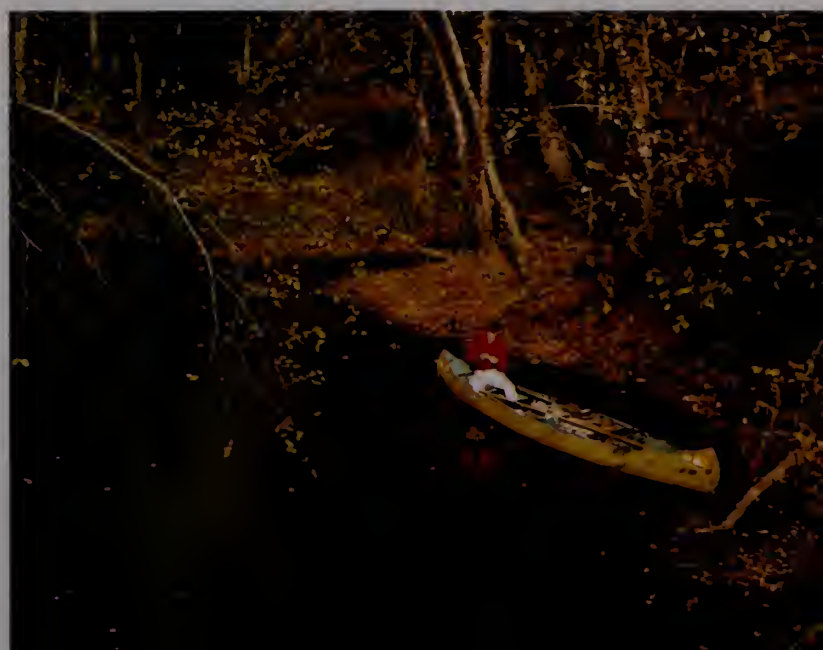
We found the predatory "jacks" most interested in ¼ oz. Johnson silver minnows with an embellishment of frog pork chunk. Red and white spoons and Mepps spinners were almost as effective. However, the pickerel attacked the lures so viciously that the treble-hooked spoons and spinners were often taken so deeply that the fish could not be returned alive to the water. With the Johnson spoon and its single weedless hook, we lost more fish at the strike but were able to release the pickerel unharmed.

Fishing Dragon Run demands accurate casting. A maze of overhead limbs demands skill in flipcasts, backhand deliveries, and underhand casts. But the pickerel are there waiting for a lure in the right place. Hot spots include quiet eddy sections of the stream, particularly quiet pools below fallen trees which break the Dragon's gentle current.

Although I delight in using ultra-light spinning tackle for both fresh- and saltwater species, the Dragon's pickerel soon had me reaching for a Fenwick "Lunkerstik" and free-spool casting reel primed with 17 pound mono. Admittedly, I was then a bit overgunned, but the Dragon pickerel are the toughest I've ever encountered.

One man who never saw Dragon Run and never will was an Indian named Chief Sealth of the Duwanish tribe in Washington state. In a letter written in 1855, the "savage" wrote: "There is no quiet place in the white man's cities. No place to hear the leaves of spring or the rustle of insect wings. But perhaps because I am savage and do not understand—the clatter only seems to insult the ears. And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of the whippoorwill or the arguments of the frog around the pond at night."

Dragon Run is the loneliest river in Virginia. It has a voice more valuable than most of us can ever know. Support its inclusion as a Scenic River before the real estate developers reach it. The Chief's words were directed at white man in general, but they are now very appropriate for the current plague of get-rich-quick developers: "One portion of the land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs. The earth is not his brother but his enemy, and when he has conquered it he moves on. He leaves his fathers' graves, and his children's birthright is forgotten."



Robert Stewart casts for pickerel along a rare open spot on upper portion of Dragon Run.

AUTUMN INTERLUDE

Text and Photos by
CLIFFORD L. LUNDGREN
Falls Church

Steve and Goldie

White Oak Canyon Waterfall

THE majesty of the forest spreading its autumn splendor over mountain trail and stream. This is what we anticipated and found on the White-oak Canyon Trail in the Shenandoah National Forest. My son-in-law Steve Campbell's glowing account of his several recent camping experiences together with the urge to photograph the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia in the fall prompted me to gamble on keeping up with Steve and his golden retriever, Goldie, on the trail, creaky old legs or no.

Fortified by my wife's affectionate farewell and my daughter's admonition that Steve take good care of her daddy, we eagerly departed for the great adventure on a lovely Friday afternoon in October. We drove onto the Skyline Drive at Thornton Gap about 3 pm and were told by a park ranger that they had been engulfed by hordes of people that day. As we discovered, however, most of the visitors departed the scene after a few hours soaking up the beauty rather than striking out on foot through the forest.

A park sign's description of the area, while brief, said a great deal. The first mile or so of the trail was through great stands of trees growing on the level or on relatively gentle slopes. We soon fell into the rhythm of the trail and all but forgot our packs as each twist and turn

Goldie hunts trout in cold, clear pool.

revealed some new beauty. The trail became much steeper after the first mile and dusk quickened its approach as the sun dropped over the rim of the canyon. We were fortunate in finding a fine site and quickly set up camp, ate a hearty meal, and relaxed by the fire which was safely contained within a deep circle of rocks.

The orange shadows cast by the fire brought centuries-old trees to life, forgetting that they were shedding their mantles for the winter. Looking overhead through peepholes in the mantle we could see a multitude of stars. All was silent except for the mysterious crinkling of dying leaves as they rustled to the ground and a persistent but pleasant hum like the rush of wind through the forest. At first we thought that the giant trees rooted in the sheltered bowl were being strummed at their great heights by winds cutting across the rim far above, but soon realized that it was the sound of water bounding down the waterfalls and through myriads of tunnels, alleys, and ponds. Sleep came slowly due to the close confines of the sleeping bag, the mysterious surroundings, and thoughts of how much the Indians and, later, the mountain people must have loved this land. But come it did.

Dawn is a joyous event in the canyon. It is slow in coming for the canyon walls hold back the sun until the last moment. Then there is a burst of light, the darkness of the deep forest is broken, and the leaves turn to gold, shimmering in preparation for their drop to earth. The joy of seeing a new dawn was expressed by Steve while drinking our after-breakfast coffee: "Beautiful! A new day. And just think. It's unspoiled . . . never been used." It was even a pleasure cleansing oneself in the cold, cold stream not yet sparkling in the slowly ascending sun. But sparkle it did along with the vivid tree umbrella above us. The display became even more eye catching as the day wore on and some small white clouds drifting in the blue sky provided a perfect background for the gold and green of the trees.

We decided not to abandon such a fine camp site and consequently departed on a trek downstream over the rocky trail carrying only a few essentials such as fishing gear and camera. I made a feeble attempt at fishing, but the camera bug won out. Steve lost a good trout or two for which we were both disappointed. But the majesty of the placid pools, the waterfalls, and the perfect blend of Goldie into the surroundings made a catch of secondary importance.

The hike back to camp was all uphill and steep at that. But the sights of beautiful plant growth and fall colors and an occasional chipmunk made the huffing and puffing worthwhile. So did the meeting of other hikers on the trail with their pleasant "hello's," each with his or her own throughts, probably peaceful and joyous ones, at least for this day. Settled back in camp we witnessed another brilliant but all too short sunset as the sun sank to meet the mountain ridge on the far side of the canyon. And even Goldie showed a weary contentment by quietly nuzzling her way into the tent even before her master retired.

Sunday morning we shouldered our packs with some reluctance at leaving such a splendid setting. But new scenes unfolded on the way out of the canyon—scenes enjoyed even as the pack got heavier and the stride slower. If the trek proved anything, it was simply that one can be 54 and in only fair condition and still have a heck of a time on the trail a surprisingly short distance from the hectic metropolitan atmosphere.

Deer Camp (Continued from page 5)

taste buds. Only a spike buck has been killed.

The next morning Wilt is back on his stump again. A few shots rumble against the mountains in the distance, on Potts Mountain to the north, on Nutter Mountain to the south, on Bald Mountain to the southeast. Club members count heavily on other hunters to send bucks scurrying into their range. Contrasting eastern Virginia deer hunting organizations, most western clubs do not have large land holdings of their own, but are set up adjacent to national forest or other public lands abundant west of the Blue Ridge. Heavy hunting pressure on public lands, especially at the first and last of the season, often sends fleeing deer onto club property.

Suddenly, Wilt almost is startled by the sound of something approaching him through the dry leaves. It's 9 a.m. Maybe another club member. Maybe a poacher. The closer it comes, the larger it sounds.

It's a deer. A buck! A nine-pointer.

The big deer stops between two small trees, and Hudson eases his rifle up for a shot. It's easy. Only 30 yards.

BOOM! The tranquility is split. The deer is hit in the heart. Yet he runs.

Several other members are attracted by Wilt's shot, ready to help dress his deer or cut off his shirttail and add it to the 12 others collected over the years and displayed in the cabin. Miss a deer, and your shirttail is certain to come off. That tradition!

A blood trail is followed. Then it gives out. The hunters begin making ever increasing circles. The buck is found dead just a couple steps off a logging road.

Newkirk brings his Jeep and the hefty buck is victoriously toted back to camp. Wilt tells over and over again how it happened as the other hunters trickle in for lunch. There is pride and envy and hope reflected in the faces of the listeners.

The season is young, and Wilt's fourth buck from the same stump stimulates hunting desire. Anxious to get back on their stands, the hunters spend less time at lunch than normal, evidence that despite the fun, food and fellowship, first of all this is a deer camp.

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

CONSERVATIONGRAM

Commission Activities and Late Wildlife News . . . At A Glance

MORE DISMAL DUE FOR PROTECTION, according to Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton, who announced recently that the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation had approved a $726,612.50 Land and Water Conservation Fund grant to North Carolina to acquire 7,549 acres for a new state park embracing a portion of the Great Dismal Swamp. The new park will be in North Carolina's Camden County and adjoins the 50,000 acre Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia, which is administered by the Interior Department's Fish and Wildlife Service. The areas protect some of the last remaining populations of East Coast black bear and bobcat, according to the Department of the Interior, plus a wide range of plants. James Watt, director of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation which administers the Land and Water Conservation Fund, commended the state of North Carolina and the Nature Conservancy for "helping to preserve the unique Dismal Swamp Wilderness." The Nature Conservancy purchased and held the property until the State was prepared to acquire it.

VIRGINIA STATE BROWN TROUT RECORD BROKEN--TWICE! Below the dam containing the waters of Philpott Reservoir anglers have had a wild time lately as huge brown trout are coming to hook in sizes designed to shake even the most jaded angler. Stanley Clark of Martinsville was first. Clark went out with tackle designed to catch a big one and did just that. His trout weighed 12 pounds, eight ounces--a new state record! That was on July 19. On July 27 Clark no longer held the brown trout record. Leon Vencell, also of Martinsville, set his hook in a brown that scaled out at a whopping 13 pounds, eleven ounces. Can this record last?

GAME COMMISSION SETS WATERFOWL SEASONS. Dates for the 1974-75 season include goose hunting from November 12, 1974, through January 20, 1975. Duck hunters will have from NOON November 27, 1974, through January 20, 1975. The unusual Wednesday duck season opening was required under the Federal waterfowl framework in order to qualify for the longest possible season. The season for Snipe was set for the period November 18, 1974, through January 20, 1975, and for Gallinules from November 27, 1974, through January 20, 1975.

The point system, which was used for the first time during the 1973-74 hunting season, remains the same with the exception of an increase from 10 points to 25 points for the American Widgeon. The other point values are for the hen mallard, black duck, mottled duck, wood duck, and hooded merganser 70 points each; the blue-winged teal, scaup, sea ducks, and merganser (except hooded) count 10 points each; all other species of ducks except canvasbacks and redheads count 25 points each. The season is closed on canvasbacks and redheads. The daily bag limit is reached when the point values of the last bird taken added to the sum of the point values of the other birds already taken during that day reaches or exceeds 100 points. Coots have a point value of zero, but the bag is limited to 15 daily and 30 in possession as under the conventional limits.

The season for Sea Ducks previously announced as opening on September 1, 1974, was changed, due to a last-minute interpretation by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Opening date for the Sea Duck season now is October 6, 1974, and closing on January 20, 1975, conforming to the closing of the waterfowl season. Sea ducks count 10 points each during the point system season, but during any part of the regular sea duck open season falling outside the point system season, the regular sea duck limit of 7 daily and 14 in possession applies.

ENDANGERED VERTEBRATES

of Virginia

THE plight of endangered species has certainly captured man's fancy in recent years. Perhaps it is our natural tendency to root for the underdog plus the fact that man is at least partially responsible for the precarious future many of these animals face.

Why do animals become endangered? Some are remnant populations from earlier times, occupying a very specific habitat which is shrinking. Others were decimated during man's early settlement. Several are victims of man's pollution or human encroachment on their habitat.

There are probably more forms that are rare or endangered in Virginia than in any other state. This is because Virginia is made up of such a diversity of habitat types.

Certainly the most spectacular animal on the list is the eastern panther (cougar), possibly extinct in Virginia. More than 20 sightings of the big cats near the Peaks of Otter indicate a possible comeback. The Game Commission has extended complete protection.

The Delmarva fox squirrel, the next largest mammal on the list, is confined to Virginia's Eastern Shore with a range extending into Maryland and Pennsylvania. It is gray in contrast to the reddish to blackish of other fox squirrels, but is about the same size. To protect it a moratorium has been declared on hunting fox squirrels in all parts of Virginia except those western counties where healthy populations are known to exist. Another endangered squirrel is the northern flying squirrel, now found only along the state's western border. It prefers mixed old growth stands of spruce or hemlock and hardwoods not favored by current forest management practices.

Three bats are on the endangered list—the Indiana bat and the Rafinesque's and Virginia big-eared bats. They are found sparingly in western Virginia limestone caves, many of which have been treated with poisonous gas to control rabies. The Dismal Swamp lemming mouse, a 4-inch grayish-brown rodent, inhabits canebrakes and grassy hummocks in the immediate vicinity of the swamp.

The bald eagle, our national emblem, certainly has the most status among our endangered species. Only 60 nesting pairs were counted in Virginia last year. Pesticide contamination of their main food supply—fish—is a major factor in their decline with hatching success less than 50%. Disturbance from waterfront developments and the cutting of nest trees during logging and construction has hurt as has indiscriminate shooting at the big birds. The peregrine falcon is suffering from many of the same woes although only passing through Virginia on its migrations. Efforts to propagate these species in captivity have met with some success, at least promising specimens for needed research if not for eventual restocking.

Although not yet on the endangered list, the rare Roanoke bass is the only freshwater game fish in danger of extirpation. A close relative of the "redeye" or rock bass, it is limited to the Roanoke River system.

The red-cockaded woodpecker is a small black and white bird whose "red cockade" is anything but prominent. It is found sparingly in the southeast corner of the state where it nests only in diseased mature pine trees over 80 years of age. Modern forestry practices don't favor this type of habitat, but some efforts are underway to save pockets of known nesting trees.

Endangered fishes are generally too small and insignificant to be of interest to the angler except as a part of the stream ecology.

The spotfin chub is a brilliant blue 3-4 inch minnow now found on gravel bars in swift portions of the North Fork of the Holston River. The rusty-side sucker is a small native redhorse with a prominent reddish-orange stripe on its side found in the Dan and Roanoke River drainages.

The duskytail darter, a 3-inch drab, sculpin-like member of the perch family, is found in quiet portions of Copper Creek. The sharphead darter, once thought extinct and now probably Virginia's most endangered fish, is a similar species found only in swift portions of the south fork of the Holston River above South Holston Reservoir. The orangefin madtom is a four-inch catfish which, along with a close relative, the

(Continued on page 18)

The male Roanoke logperch, a handsome 6-inch member of the darter family, is typical of endangered fishes. Of little interest to anglers, it is found in or near swift, stony portions of the Roanoke River and its tributaries, where turbidity and pollution are minimal.

This article is based on the 1973 M.S. thesis, "Rare and Endangered Terrestrial Vertebrates," by Wayne P. Russ, Virginia Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, VIP&SU, Blacksburg, and on personal correspondence from Dr. Robert E. Jenkins, assistant professor of biology, Roanoke College.

VIRGINIA'S ENDA

GERED WILDLIFE

The Snowshoe Hare In Virginia

By JAMES B. AUGUST
Graduate Student, V.P.I. & S.U.
Blacksburg

THE two beagles sang merrily as they chased the rabbit through the dense rhododendron and mountain laurel thicket, but instead of a dusty brown cottontail appearing in the clearing, a snow-white creature with long ears and abnormally large feet emerged from the tangles. Though this sounds like a scene from the North Country, more and more Virginia hunters may be witnessing it if efforts to establish snowshoe hares in Virginia continue to meet with success.

Hare is removed from its shipping carton to be tagged and released in Virginia.

Scientifically named *Lepus americanus,* the hare is known by two common names, snowshoe or varying hare. The name snowshoe is derived from the back legs which are heavily furred and over five inches in length, resembling snowshoes, which help the animal skim over the softest snow while its predators bog down. It is called the varying hare because the color of its fur changes to coincide with the changing climatic conditions. In summer, the snowshoe hare is the same color as the cottontail and is quite inconspicuous in the world of lush, green vegetation and dark shadows, but as winter comes and snow covers the ground, it changes from brown to white so that it is virtually invisible against a snowy background. This changing of coat color is dependent upon the day-length of the different seasons. As the days become longer in the spring, the hare will again change from white to the summer coat of brown.

The snowshoe hare is closely related to the cottontail rabbit which is common throughout Virginia. The chief difference is that cottontail young are born naked with the eyes closed and have to be cared for by the mother for at least two weeks. Snowshoe hares are born

fully furred with their eyes open and are able to eat greens in a matter of days. From April through August the snowshoe females produce their litters, which vary in size from two to eight with the average number of young per litter being three. It is not unusual for a female to have four or even five litters a year. Snowshoe hares are a little larger than cottontails, weighing between three and four pounds.

The scientific name for the eastern snowshoe hare is *Lepus americanus virginianus*. Snowshoes once existed in the mountainous areas of this state. Many old books mention the snowshoe hare in certain parts of Virginia, and older folks in Grayson, Highland, and other mountainous counties remember their fathers hunting or telling about white rabbits. Logging practices which removed the northern type coniferous forest vegetation from areas above 3,000 feet in Virginia caused the snowshoe hare populations to dwindle. West Virginia was more fortunate in that populations still exist in the counties of Pocahontas, Randolph, and Tucker. Hunters annually harvest about 3,000 hares from these counties. Those mountain areas above 3,000 feet which are covered with dense rhododendron and mountain laurel thickets are the favorable living places for snowshoes. These thickets not only provide cover but also food, as snowshoes will eat almost any type of succulent green vegetation during the summer months and the bark and small twigs of maple, birch, serviceberry, blackberry, mountain laurel, rhododendron, and beech during the winter.

The Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries traded the West Virginia Conservation Commission a shipment of turkeys for fifty snowshoe hares in January, 1961. The hares, which came from New Brunswick, Canada, were released in the Laurel Fork area of Highland County. The release was successful because over 100 hares were harvested by hunters from that area last year.

Snowshoe hare in rhododendron thicket in No-Business area of Giles County.

Hare weighs safety of box against freedom in the unknown with dog close by.

A study is now under way at V.P.I. & S.U. attempting to establish new populations of snowshoe hare in its ancestral territory. In December, 1972, a shipment of 100 hares were flown from New Brunswick, Canada, to Roanoke, Virginia, then taken by truck to four release sites in Giles County. The sites were Mountain Lake, North Fork of Stony Creek, Dismal Creek, and No Business Creek. Another release was planned for March, 1973, but due to poor trapping conditions in New Brunswick, the hares were never received.

The second release took place in January, 1974. The trapper sent word that he had 200 hares ready for shipment, but due to the energy crisis cutback on fuel for airlines, all animal freight had been cancelled. Orlie MacLean agreed to drive the shipment from Harvey Station, New Brunswick, to North Adams, Massachusetts, so I drove from Blacksburg to North Adams and back with 200 boxes full of "white bunnies." The trip turned into an ordeal because of icy road conditions in New Jersey, snow in New York and Massachusetts, and fog in Virginia, but thirty-six hours and 1,200 miles later, the 200 hares were released at the sites in Giles County.

The trip was unnecessarily exhausting because it had to be made in as short a period of time as possible. Because gasoline stations closed for weekends, and I was not to pick up the hares until noon Saturday, it was necessary to drive non-stop back to Blacksburg. Fortunately, we were able to buy gasoline at truck stops along Interstate 81. Furthermore, the hares had been in the boxes for at least forty-eight hours. Not only were they in danger of suffocating because the boxes were closely packed, they were also beginning to gnaw their way out of those cartons. Driving down the New Jersey Turnpike, hares began to hop around on top of the cartons. There was a constant sound of gnawing. By the time we reached Virginia, two hares had become brave enough to explore the driver's and passenger's seats. Although my dog was ever watch-

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yellowfin madtom, is found in mountain streams. The Roanoke logperch is a slender member of the darter group, sometimes 6 inches long, found in the upper tributaries of the Roanoke River and in similar swift flowing streams on into southeastern Virginia.

Other than the continuing threats of pollution, channelization and other degradation of stream quality, impoundments pose the greatest threat to endangered fishes. Lakes that flood a major portion of a drainage may make most of the habitat unsuitable for stream-loving species. Displacement by naturally or artifically introduced competitive species is also a possibility.

Among the endangered reptiles the bog turtle has received the most publicity. Its little remaining habitat of marshy meadows in Virginia's highlands is constantly threatened by drainage and construction. The wood turtle's range just touches the northern tip of Virginia.

Species of snakes that are considered endangered include the canebreak rattlesnake, the little known scarlet king snake, and the northern pine snake. All suffer from human persecution and habitat loss.

The carpenter frog is found sparingly throughout Virginia's tidewater area mostly in acidic sphagnum bogs. Loss of habitat through construction and drainage coupled with poor ability to compete with other species appears to be the main factor whittling down populations.

Three members of the salamander group are classed as endangered. The largest of these is an eel-like form nearly a yard long known as the greater siren. Generally greenish yellow in color, this unusual animal inhabits ditches, ponds and swamps in Virginia's coastal plain.

A shorter but still unusually large salamander on the endangered list is the mudpuppy, a brownish creature with frilly red gills. It is limited to southwest Virginia streams which are considered the fringe of its range. A similar but smaller species is the dwarf waterdog, a dark brown to black salamander which inhabits streams in the Dismal Swamp area.

Passage of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 indicates a commitment on the part of the American people to temper our attitude of absolute dominion over wild things. It gives federal protection to the most seriously threatened species, including some in other countries. A federal ban on trading in these animals and parts thereof has had some profound economic impact on the pet, fur and leather industries.

The new act promises economic assistance to states that have taken acceptable steps to protect endangered animals within their borders. Virginia has had a law roughly paralleling the federal law for the protection of endangered species since 1972. The Game Commission has further extended state protection to the cougar and to fox squirrels in eastern Virginia in addition to sponsoring continuing research to more accurately determine the plight of these animals.

Since most endangered animals are not economically important, public concern is vital to their continued existence. In most cases, preservation of critical habitat is the most important aspect of assuring their survival.

Since 17 of the 61 species considered rare or endangered are found in the Dismal Swamp, preservation of this unique habitat as a Wildlife Refuge should go a long way toward assuring them a secure future. Other scattered bits and pieces of habitat are not so easy to delineate or protect. An overwhelming majority of these animals inhabit wetland areas or are dependent on them in some way. Thus, better control over drainage, stream channel alteration, filling, dredging, and other developmental practices which adversely affect these wetland areas is bound to benefit many species. Artificial rearing and restocking of endangered species is a last hope.

	CURRENT STATUS			THREATS TO EXISTENCE			
ENDANGERED SPECIES	Incr. ↑	Stable ↔	Decr. ↓	Habitat Loss	Reckless Killing	Pollution	Human Encroachment
Cougar *(Felis concolor couguar)*	X				X		X
Delmarva Fox Squirrel *(Sciurus niger neglecus)*			X	X			
Northern Flying Squirrel *(Glaucomys sabrinus fuscus)*			X	X			
Dismal Swamp Lemming Mouse *(Synaptomys cooperi helaletes)*		X		X			X
Indiana Bat *(Myotis sodalis)*			X		X		
Virginia Big-eared Bat *(Plecotus townsendii virginianus)*			X		X		
Rafinesque's Big-eared Bat *(Plecotus r. rafinesquii)*			X		X		
Southern Bald Eagle *(Haliaeetus l. leucocephalus)*	X			X	X	X	X
Peregrine Falcon *(Falco peregrinus anatum)*			X			X	X
Red-cockaded Woodpecker *(Dendrocopos b. borealis)*			X	X			
Spotfin Chub *(Hybopsis monacha)*		X		X		X	
Rustyside Sucker *(Moxostoma hamiltoni)*			X	X		X	
Yellowfin Madtom *(Noturus flavipinnis)*		X		X		X	
Orangefin Madtom *(Noturus gilberti)*			X	X		X	
Sharphead Darter *(Etheostoma acuticeps)*			X	X		X	
Roanoke Logperch *(Percina rex)*			X			X	
Duskytail Darter *(Etheostoma sp.)*		X		X		X	
Canebrake Rattlesnake *(Crotalus horridus atricaudatus)*			X	X	X		
Scarlet King Snake *(Lampropeltis triangulum elapsoides)*			X	X	X		X
Northern Pine Snake *(Pituophis m. melanoleucus)*			X	X	X		
Bog Turtle *(Clemmys muhlenbergi)*			X	X			
Wood Turtle *(Clemmys insculpta)*			X	X			X
Carpenter Frog *(Rana virgatipes)*			X	X			
Greater Siren *(Siren lacertina)*			X	X			X
Mudpuppy *(Necturus m. maculosus)*			X	X		X	
Dwarf Waterdog *(Necturus p. punctatus)*			X	X			

THE SQUIRREL HUNTER'S

MANY DAWNS

By BOB GOOCH
Troy

DAWN came painfully slow. I kicked myself for having deserted a warm bed so early. I could have slept another half hour.

The Virginia squirrel hunter can choose from a variety of dawns.

First there are the ones in Brunswick, Greensville, Lunenburg and Southampton Counties where two-week seasons open September 1. September sunrises can be brilliant—red ones that warn the hunter of approaching storms, or gold ones that tell him the hot September sun will be unrelenting. He has to peek through the thick green foliage of late summer to see them. And even though the dawn is the coolest part of a summer day, it can be hot and muggy in September.

Then there are the October dawns. They greet the hunter in a number of counties ranging from Accomack and Northampton on the Eastern Shore to Alleghany, Carroll and Floyd in the western mountains. An October sunrise can also be beautiful, and the foliage adds to its glory. Dawn in October is rarely muggy. It is more likely to be chilly and frosty. A light wool shirt under a camouflage jacket feels good. The fingers may get a little cold, but not so numb the hunter cannot squeeze the trigger of his little 22 rifle as the crosshairs of his scope settle on a fat, well-fed bushytail. October dawns were made for squirrel hunting.

And finally there are the winter dawns, the cold ones hunters in a big block of east of the Blue Ridge Counties must meet in order to hunt squirrels. Winter dawns can also be beautiful, but they are cold and challenging. To say they are crisp is expressing it mildly. Just as the September dawns are the coolest part of the day, the winter ones are the coldest. It takes a dedicated squirrel hunter to crawl out of a warm winter bed for a vigil in a hardwoods stripped of its foliage. Dawn comes ever so slowly and brings with it little warmth.

It was an October dawn Johnny and I were waiting for. We consider it the ideal time to hunt squirrels. Unfortunately, my home county of Fluvanna does not have a fall squirrel season so we had to travel to neighboring Louisa for this morning rendezvous with a colony of squirrels. The Fluvanna squirrel season did not open until November 12 in 1973.

Minutes dragged by. I kept my eyes on the eastern sky for the first glint of color that would brighten the monotonous black of the night. Finally, it was there—just a faint glow at first, but it widened quickly.

I had hunted the area before and knew roughly where to expect the first game to appear. We made the usual stand-hunting preparations—selected a couple of big oaks to rest our backs against and break up our outlines, and scraped the loose leaves away so the movement of our feet would not alarm our quarry. When possible the squirrel hunter should also select a stand that offers him a rest for his rifle. A small sapling will do. It is just about impossible to hold a rifle steady enough in an offhand position to consistently make good shots on squirrels.

While the ground was reasonably dry as it often is in October, and we were seated directly on it, a small piece of canvas or even a camper's air pillow will keep the hunter's seat dry and make him more comfortable. Some hunters use their folding dove stools. On a cold morning the cold from the earth seeps into the body, and a hunter seated on the ground will get cold more quickly.

It was almost light now and the forest picture began

The woods are in full dress in October.

to unfold. The big oaks and hickories we expected to produce our game were well within the range of our rifles.

"I hear one, Uncle Bob!" Johnny's hushed voice registered excitement.

I listened intently for the rustle of leaves or the scraping noise made by a squirrel scampering along a limb or tree trunk. Johnny gripped his rifle tightly and raised it slowly, trying for a sight picture high in a big oak. Following his aim, I picked up his target, a frisky gray scampering about in the tree. He was hungry and headed for an early morning breakfast—no chance to settle a scope on him. Suddenly he leaped for another tree and was gone.

Again we waited.

I got the next opportunity, a better one. I don't know where the squirrel came from, but there it was, sitting in the crotch of a slender oak gnawing on a ripe acorn. The range was close so I didn't need a rest as I got him in my scope. I had plenty of time—took a deep breath, settled the crosshairs on the squirrel's head and squeezed the trigger. The little rifle barked and the animal slumped. At first I feared he would hang in the crotch of the tree. I didn't relish climbing that oak.

Finally he lost his grip and dropped to the forest floor. It didn't move so I marked its position and left it to retrieve later when the action had slowed. When the hunting is at its peak the hunter should satisfy himself that the quarry is dead, but delay recovering it until the action has tapered off.

The mild report of a 22 rifle rarely disturbs feeding squirrels, and if it does they will resume feeding within 10 to 15 minutes.

Johnny and I settled back for another brief wait.

A squirrel barked out of range, deep in the woods. Another one scampered up a tree—also out of range. I had to restrain Johnny. The squirrel hunter on a good stand has to resist the temptation to get up and move about in search of game. Later in the day still-hunting (stalking and waiting) is fine, but if the selection of a stand has been good and the hunter is seeing game he is better off sticking to his stand for the first hour of hunting.

It was Johnny's turn again.

He suddenly swung his rifle sharply to the left. Even as my gaze followed his aim, the rifle cracked and a fat gray squirrel slumped on the ground. This one was feeding under a pine tree, apparently on the hearts of the pine cones.

While Johnny was bolting another bullet into the chamber of his rifle, I spotted another one—also feeding on pine cones.

I took this one from a sitting position—by twisting slightly, but not having to move from my stand.

Squirrel seasons have long been a controversial subject in the Old Dominion, and it is time they were removed from that atmosphere. The bushytail is our most popular species of game. He ranks number 2 nationally, but here in the Old Dominion he slips ahead of the cottontail for the number 1 spot.

The most controversial seasons are the early ones

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Johnny and a pair of gray squirrels. We bagged three.

BEE BALM

and other mints

By ELIZABETH MURRAY
Charlottesville

Illustrated by Lucile Walton

Monarda didyma

THE mints, or Labiatae, comprise a large, cosmopolitan family with some two hundred genera and about three thousand species. The plants characteristically have square stems and opposite leaves, and are usually pleasantly aromatic. Economically the family is important as a source of aromatic oils and garden ornamentals. A majority of the savory herbs which we use in the kitchen belong in the family—sage, thyme, marjoram or oregano, hyssop, rosemary and mint itself. Many are used in the flavoring of medications and confections; for example, peppermint, spearmint and horehound, *Marrubium,* ingredient of old-fashioned horehound candy. In this country, *Lamium amplexicaule* (henbit) can be eaten as a pot-herb, and *Stachys* or woundwort has a crisp, white tuber which may be eaten raw or cooked as a vegetable. Many mints are cultivated for their showy flowers and/or scent such as lavender, salvia and species of *Monarda, Scutellaria, Nepeta, Teucrium, Coleus* and *Pycnanthemum.*

In the U.S. the showiest of the wild mints is *Monarda didyma,* known variously as Oswego tea, bee balm, horsemint, mountain mint, fragrant balm and Indian's plume. Unfortunately it is not very common in Virginia, being found only in the highest mountain areas such as around Whitetop and Mount Rogers in the southern part of the state. Its range extends to moist, shady, hilly localities from Georgia north to Canada and west to Michigan. It will grow well at lower elevations if transplanted carefully, and many people cultivate it in their flower gardens. Traditionally every old farmstead would have a riot of color along the front fence consisting of hollyhocks, nasturtiums, jewelweed, sweet william, petunias, scarlet sage and big clumps of bee balm, brilliant at the height of summer.

Monarda didyma is a rather coarse perennial herb which grows about 2-3 feet high. There is a single dense head of scarlet flowers at the tip of each stem, surrounded by a circle of bright reddish, drooping bracts which add to the general colorful show. The dark green leaves are thin, oblong lance-shaped and sharply toothed with hairy leaf stems or *petioles.* Each pair is offset from the adjacent pair so that mutual shading is minimized. The conspicuous funnel-shaped corolla is two-lipped. The erect, slender upper lip is arched and sharp-pointed; the large, spreading lower lip is three-lobed with the center lobe longer than the rest and often notched at the apex. Two long anther-bearing stamens extend beyond the corolla, a feature which gives the plant its specific name. *Didymus* means 'twin' and was used by Linnaeus for plants bearing stamens in pairs. There is a single pistil also protruding from the flower. The incurved green calyx is slightly hairy in the throat. The plant blooms from July to September and is a treat to find here, though in mountainous West Virginia and further north it is commoner along roadside banks and in woody thickets. The Indians and early settlers made tea from its leaves; hence the name, Oswego tea.

A closely related member of the same genus which is much commoner in our area is *Monarda fistulosa,* the wild bergamot. The plant is smaller and more slender than bee balm. The flowers are lavender, purplish or pink and sometimes white. It grows in much drier localities and is frequently found at the edges of woods, in clearings, and along roadsides. Near Mountain Lake there are several cleared areas in the woods where originally a mountain farm stood. Nothing remains but a few old apple trees and some rotting timbers from the buildings, but in midsummer the clearings are literally carpeted with wild bergamot of all shades.

The genus *Monarda* was named for Nicholas Monardez, a Spanish physician and botanist who wrote many tracts on medicinal and other useful plants in the late sixteenth century.

GAME

The Other Alternative

By SANDRA S. MEADOWS
Newport News

WITH all the talk these days about the price of food, people have begun to look elsewhere for the provisions with which to feed their families. If your husband is a hunter, you have an obvious solution to the current food shortages and price rises. Unfortunately, too many women think, "game—ugh," or "what in heaven's name am I supposed to do with *that*?" and blithely give away the plentiful bounty from their husband's leisure-time activities.

Hunting is a good sport for a man—it gets him into the clean, quiet solitude of the woods and has the advantage of a possible supply of delicious meat for your table. In our beautiful tidewater Virginia, there is still an abundance of game, much as there was during the early founding days of our country when Indians and settlers hunted here. Now, of course, limits are imposed, as they should be, and every true sportsman is an avid conservationist who respects the state game laws. Within only an hour's drive of our suburban home my husband and sons can bag deer, squirrels, rabbits, ducks, quail, and doves, all of which provide excellent table fare.

For years we gave away everything my husband brought home—I simply did not know what to do with game. Within the past few years, however, my Indian heritage has evidently surfaced and I now get real satisfaction out of cooking and serving these more natural foods. In fact, for me the height of boredom is putting a beef roast in the oven to cook. I would just as soon not bother.

If other sportsmen are like my husband, they enjoy hunting much more when their wives show an inclination toward cooking what they bring home. It helps their "lord, master, provider, and protector" image, which is bound to have suffered with the recent women's liberation movement.

So a word to the wise should suffice: If he brings it home, you learn to cook it. Not only will you save money but you also have the opportunity to share in your husband's hobby.

If your husband is a deer hunter, praise the Lord! There are few foods any more tasty than venison pot roast, venison meat loaf, or venison steak. Imagine how much grocery money you can save if you have a butchered deer stashed away in your freezer. Assuming that you serve beef three times a week you can substitute venison twice, and save six dollars or more on your grocery bill.

A small deer, about sixty or seventy pounds, dressed weight, is perfect for eating purposes. The meat, in most cases, will be tender and delicious. From a deer this size a good butcher should give you four to six roasts, three or four packages of chops, eight to ten pounds of ground meat, about four packages of round steaks, plus ribs, heart, and liver. Whenever possible, have an experienced butcher cut up and freezer wrap your meat, even though your husband will have to gut the animal as soon as it hits the ground. A butcher knows exactly what he is doing, he can cut the portions to a size most suitable for your family, and the cost is negligible. If you have any of the venison ground, ask to have some pork or beef fat ground with it to provide the desired fat content.

For your first venison meal try a roast. First, wash a three or four pound roast, salt and pepper to taste, shake a bit of garlic salt on the meat, and cut up enough onions, carrots, celery, and potatoes to feed your family. Place the vegetables in a pan with the meat. Pour over some tomato sauce, tomato paste or canned tomatoes; add enough water to keep the meat from sticking; cover; and cook six hours at an oven temperature of 250° to 275°.

Another very simple way to cook a venison roast is to shake salt, pepper, and garlic salt over the meat, place it in a browning bag, and cook at 350° for about two and a half hours. Use the browning bag according to directions.

One word of warning about roasts—do not have them cut very large. Venison roasts are quite rich and very filling, and one roast will go a long way toward serving your family. Also remember that the flavor improves with age; so whenever possible, cook your roast a day or two before you intend to serve it.

A quick recipe for ground venison will give you a second meal for the week. To a pound or two of ground meat, add chopped onions, celery, and green peppers in amounts that suit your taste. Add enough cracker meal to hold the meat together—¼ to ½ cup, a few splashes of Worcestershire sauce, and one or two beaten eggs. Mix well and mold into a loaf. Drain a can of sliced mushrooms and pour over the meat loaf. Cook uncovered, for about an hour and a half, at 300° to 350°. At serving time pour off the fat, slice, and serve with the hottest brown mustard you can find. Whenever you cook venison loaf make more than your family can eat at one meal because it does very well, cold, on sandwiches.

At this point you should feel secure enough with

venison to experiment on your own. Try round steak, liver smothered in onions, breaded venison cutlets with tomato sauce, barbecued ribs, or anything else that sounds good. Cooking game can be very casual, so don't be afraid to try whatever you want.

If your husband hunts squirrels or rabbits, then you have another opportunity to cook tasty and nourishing meals. When these small game animals are cleaned, be sure that the musk glands in the legs are removed. This improves the taste of the meat as well as making the cooking odor more pleasant. Also, remove the rib sections since they contain very little meat. Before you freeze or cook rabbits and squirrels, cut them into serving size pieces and soak for several hours in lightly salted water to which a small amount of vinegar has been added. Change the water at least once during this time. This procedure will soak out the excess blood and make the meat almost white in color.

Before cooking these small animals, unless they are going into a stew, parboil them for about an hour. They have very muscular legs, of course, and parboiling serves to tenderize them. After parboiling, drain and coat the meat with seasoned flour, and fry like chicken. Be sure you use enough salt; for some reason squirrels and rabbits seem to require more seasoning than other meats. Serve with buttered, creamed potatoes, green beans seasoned with bacon fat, mushrooms, and your family will clean their plates and ask for more. You should allow one squirrel for each adult, but a rabbit and a half should serve two people.

Squirrels are also delicious barbecued or in a Brunswick stew. To barbecue, parboil first, then brown on all sides in a frying pan, and simmer in your favorite sauce until tender. Whenever you make a stew, include not only squirrels but rabbits as well. Be sure that you remove the small bones before serving. The meat will cook off the bones and a spoonful of tiny bones can ruin even the heartiest appetite.

Now instead of chicken once a week, substitute rabbit or squirrel and save another two or three dollars of your grocery money!

Some of the best game to eat is fowl—ducks and doves being at the top of the list. Duck hunting is probably done under more miserable conditions than any other kind of hunting, but if your husband is a good shot the rewards are great.

If a duck has been eating fish, you may as well throw it away because it will have a fishy taste. However, any duck that has been eating grain foods will be delicious. Always allow one duck for every two people.

To prepare duck, wash well, put a piece of celery in the cavity, salt and pepper the outside of the duck, place in a shallow baking pan breast side up, and cook for about an hour and a half, at 325°. Always lay a strip or two of bacon over the bird. Cook uncovered, unless it begins to brown too quickly, in which case you should cover it lightly with foil.

After the duck is done place it on a heated platter, slice, and serve with wild rice and gravy. To make gravy add flour and water to the drippings, brown by whatever method you use, crumble the bacon into the liquid, and add a can of mushrooms. This is a truly elegant company meal.

If it is possible to top the taste of wild duck, I guess dove is the bird to do it. Have your husband simply pop out the breast sections since they are the only meaty parts of this small game bird. Also save the hearts to cook with the breasts. To prepare, wash the meat, coat in seasoned flour, and brown on all sides in a small amount of cooking oil. Remove the meat from the pan, make a medium-thick gravy, and simmer, covered, with the meat for an hour to an hour and a half. Add water during cooking, if necessary, to keep the birds from sticking to the pan. Serve with wild rice and a chopped lettuce and hard-boiled egg salad, which has been tossed lightly with seasoned croutons and onion dressing. Allow at least four birds for each person.

Snowshoe Hare (Continued from page 17)

ful, the hares showed no fear of him, some even sitting beside him for a second until my wife shooed them back to the safety of the boxes. One did panic and we had to stop the van to extract him from the wires under the dashboard. For the remainder of the trip, he was satisfied with sitting on the box behind my shoulder.

The snowshoe hare will never be as numerous as the cottontail rabbit or gray squirrel in Virginia because the habitat is limiting, but if these releases are successful, other releases could be planned in the future, in other sections of Highland, Bath, and Augusta Counties and especially the Mount Rogers area of Grayson County. The snowshoe hare would be a truly unique game animal for those who hunt with beagles because these hares make a much wider circle when pursued by dogs than the cottontail does. They also do not retreat to the safety of a hole as the cottontail does, but with the ability to skim across even the deepest snow, it is truly a challenge for the beagle fancier.

Hunting the snowshoe in Virginia can present one big problem. If these populations are established and huntable, seasons should be changed to provide some protection for the hare. At present the hare is not on the protected list of Virginia's birds and animals as it should be until sufficient numbers are established to permit hunting. Later a season should be established in the latter part of the fall and winter, perhaps from mid-December to mid-January when snow will be available in the mountains of Virginia. Because of the limited areas in which these animals will appear, a daily limit of two hares should be in effect. This would not destroy the established populations, a distinct possibility in a game animal with limited habitat, while at the same time providing recreation for the hunter. Yes, there are snowshoe hares in Virginia, hopefully to stay.

Know Your COMMISSIONERS

BILL WEST

CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION OF GAME AND INLAND FISHERIES

Text & Photos by F. N. SATTERLEE
Information Officer

ALTHOUGH a Pennsylvanian by birth, William H. West grew up in and around both Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio. His father loved and understood the outdoors and wildlife, was an ardent hunter and fisherman, and insisted on an unwavering safety code concerning firearms. This all became second nature to Bill. Nearly from the time he first walked, he accompanied his father in the field. When he was just six years old he bagged his first pheasant and that same year journeyed to Canada to fish with his dad. This fishing trip became a yearly tradition until he entered Williams College in Williamstown, Mass.

Following graduation in 1943, he joined the Merchant Marine as an able seaman. He served in that capacity for one year, during which time he survived the torpedoing of his ship in the Gulf of Mexico by a German submarine. Next he joined the U.S. Army as a private and later as first sergeant assigned to the Combat Engineers. He participated in the D-Day landings at Juno Beach in support of British forces landing in that area, in seven river assault crossings (three of them across the Rhine River in Germany) and was discharged on New Year's Day 1946.

Bill West returned to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to work in the coal business. He married the former Elizabeth Christopher of Morgantown, West Virginia, and eventually the Wests moved to Middleburg, Virginia, where they purchased a 400 acre farm and began raising purebred Hereford cattle. In 1951, he built his current home, Locksley Farm, located near Millwood in Clarke County. For a time he continued to raise Herefords, but now leases his land to a commercial cattle producer.

Currently, Mr. West is vice-president of the F & M National Corporation in Winchester, Virginia. He is also a member of the executive committee of the Winchester Memorial Hospital and president of the Comprehensive Health Planning District for Region #7 in the Commonwealth. The Wests are members of Cunningham Chapel Parish Episcopal Church. In March of 1971 he was appointed as the Seventh Congressional District member on the Game Commission and on July 1 of this year became chairman of the ten-member body.

To Bill West, a man who has hunted and fished since early boyhood, the most satisfying aspect of service as a member of the Game Commission is the opportunity to attempt to make a contribution in the conservation of our natural resources and to have the pleasure of working with the sportsmen and women of Virginia in this endeavor.

An ardent and accomplished devotee of the piscatory pleasures, Bill West selects a favorite rod for one of his frequent practice casting sessions.

RAIL HUNT

By BILL MARTIN
Lexington

Ed Morris of Culpeper examines his first rail from the lush greenness of an Eastern Shore marsh.

Author photos

THE waiting is the worst part. Rails or "marsh hens" are the shotgunner's first opportunity of the season. The season opens in September, one full week before the dove season, and closes in November. But the tide, not the calendar, controls the shooting. Rails are secretive, furtive birds, who skulk away the day in the thickest part of the marsh. In order to reach them with a boat, the tide must be at full flood. Thus, the wait.

The wait seems forever when you're sitting on the veranda of the Wachapreague Hotel with the green marsh stretching out before you far and faint into the edges of a limitless imagination. You can only guess how it will be out there in the marsh, where the smell of salt, gunpowder, and marsh blends with the color of egrets, bitterns, and terns into a collage of wonder.

A watched tide never rises, so you go back to wiping the double-barreled twenty gauge for the tenth time. Then you see him. It has to be your guide, with that walk of a man more accustomed to the moving deck of a boat than mundane earth. The ancient hip boots and long-billed khaki cap increase the probability that this is the man to take you to the marsh hens. When he approaches closely enough so that you can see his blue eyes and weathered face, any doubt is dispelled.

"The tide's not what she should be," he reports, squinting over his shoulder at the water now lapping further up the crusty pilings. "But we'll find some birds," he adds.

As you stow your cased gun after stepping aboard the guide's boat, you appreciate the solidness underfoot. That solidness will be a decisive factor when a careless rail splashes into the air almost beside the boat. You also appreciate the task in store for your guide who will have to push you and the heavy wooden boat through the marsh.

Rail guides or "pushers" are a disappearing breed. Like many who make their living from the marshes and the sea, the pushers are generally older men. Young men do not become pushers. The pay is low and the work is hard. A good pusher will charge anywhere from $25 to $50

Centering on a flushed rail. Note expended shell in air and shot charge beyond the bird.

for a tide's shooting. But the shooters generally come only on weekends, so the money isn't much.

1973 was a good year for Eastern Shore rails. There were no high flood tides during the spring to kill the newly hatched rails. This summer the tides reaped their toll—half or more of the rail nests.

It's a fifteen-minute run with a venerable Johnson 18 h.p. outboard before you reach the first big creek into the marsh. The guide kills the motor, locks it into a raised position, and picks up the long pole. The pole is well polished, not by wax, but by hours and hours in the marsh.

The heavy boat glides deeper into the marsh, into a tangled sea of green and gold. Your guide is good, so the boat moves straight ahead, fast enough to flush the rails, rather than causing them to flee, afoot and unseen. Rails are reluctant to fly. Consequently, the guide often thrashes at the marsh with the long wooden pole.

"Shoot!"

Startled by the combined shout of the guide and the close-range flush of the rail, your first shot is behind and too high. Before you can correct the error, the rail drops back into the green cover. Knowing that the rail's long-toed feet will propel it through the marsh much faster than his pole, your guide wisely counsels you to forget that particular bird.

But the tide is rising and this is a good marsh. The next rail jumps ahead of the boat, presenting an easy, going-away target. One rail in the boat. Easy targets, these skinny, slow-to-fly birds. You miss two more birds before you observe that rails are easy to overshoot. Unhappy about having to fly at all, the rail quickly slants back down into the marsh. Thus, after the initial jump into the air, the flight is generally downhill.

All too soon, the telltale finger of submerged grass in the serpentine creeks points back toward the sea. The shooting ends with the fall of the tide. Far better to remember that last good shot, than remembering the agony of dragging a beamy, wooden boat across several hundred yards of clinging marsh at low tide.

Rails are not great game birds, compared to quail or doves. They're easy marks. But quail don't live where the tide visits and controls, nor do dove plunge into thick cover and gallop like briny roadrunners.

The attraction of rail shooting is the marsh itself, a world older than man yet filled with the fertility of tomorrow. Rail hunting is the good chill of the boat ride back to shore with the sun providing a scarlet backdrop for a line of geese flying high overhead, bound somewhere in your dreams. Above all perhaps, rail hunting is the weather-roughed face of the guide, and his blue eyes reflecting an intelligence ignorant of literature or grammar, but rich with things unwritten or unspoken, things that only the marsh knows. But the marsh will never tell and the old guides are getting older, soon to die.

Many Dawns (Continued from page 20)

In Virginia the bushytail holds no. 1 spot as most popular game species. Nationwide the cottontail rabbit holds this distinction—squirrel running second.

that open in September, some on the first and some on the fifteenth. Squirrel hunting is popular then because the little rodents are busy cutting hickory nuts and raiding ripe corn and are easy to hunt.

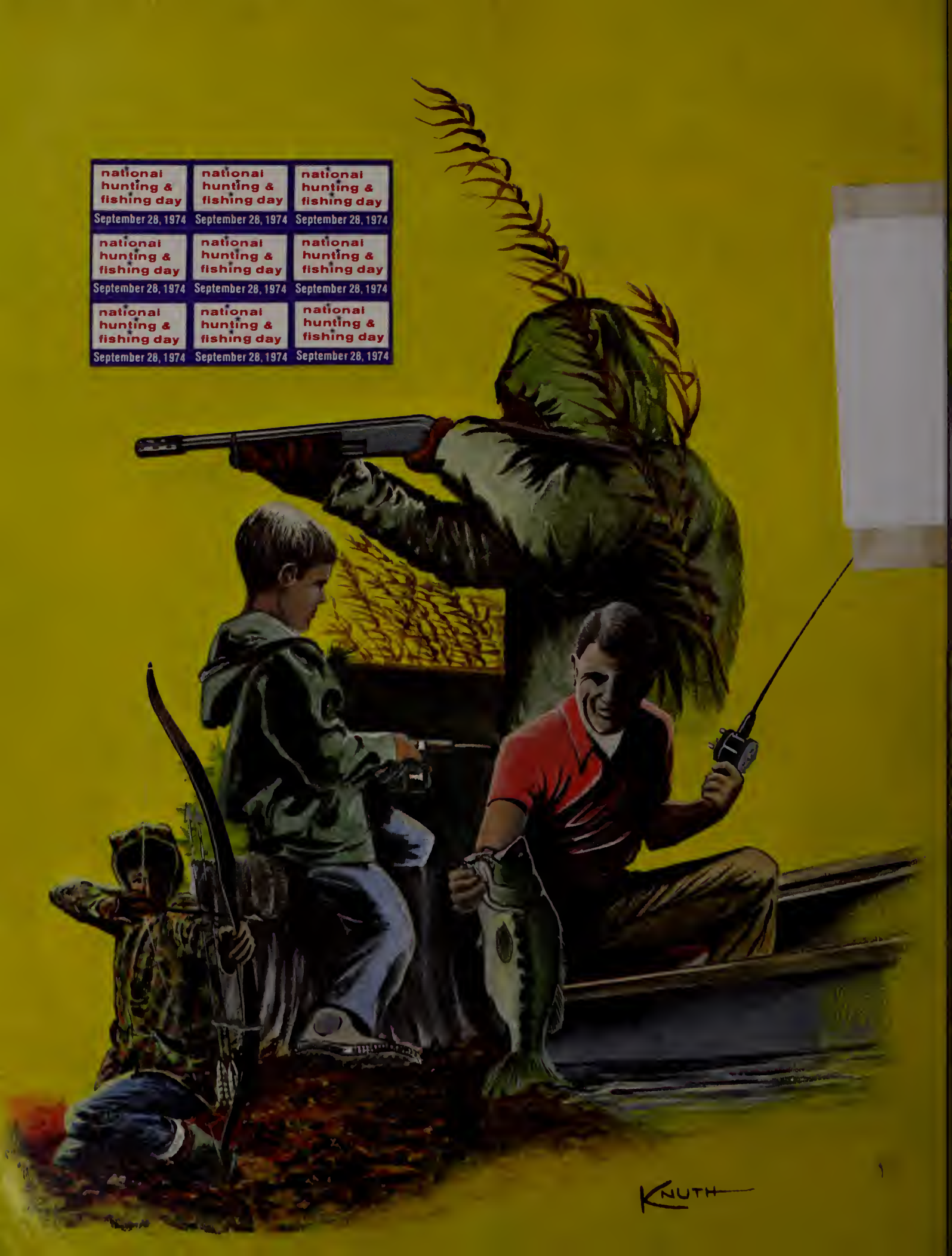
Biologically, September is too early. Squirrels breed twice a year, and in September the second crop is still nursing, or too tiny to hunt. Another drawback to the September hunting is the presence of botflies or "wolves" that infest the animals in the summer months. Though harmless, they detract from the desirability of the game as food. A common expression heard from September hunters is to the effect that "I got five, but two of them were no good," meaning they were infested with botflies.

The late fall or winter hunting is interesting, challenging and biologically sound. Much of the crop that was so bountiful in September has been lost to natural causes—storms and cold weather, predators and to migration if the mast crops are light. The squirrel is a hardy little animal and not as subject to predation as other game, but nature does take its toll. Squirrels so lost could have been harvested in October.

And so we come to October, the month Johnny and I enjoyed our early morning hunt. We bagged only three squirrels, but could have taken more by simply extending our hunt. Three was all we needed, and we had enjoyed the prime hunting time.

By October the botflies are gone, and even the second brood of the year are now on their own. They may not be large, but they are fending for themselves; and if a hunter takes a female, he has not jeopardized a whole family that could later fill his daily limit of six. And bushytail may still be cutting, though not like he was back the first week in September. But best of all, the squirrel crops are at their seasonal peak and the game will be hardy and healthy. Young squirrels will be tender and tasty.

The October sunrises represent the best of the squirrel hunter's dawns. Hunting conditions are ideal; the hardwoods will be in full dress. An October dawn is a pleasure to meet.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